



Women: Taking the Lead to Ensure Our Rights

The 25th Annual *Write Women Back Into History* Essay Contest

To give students a deeper and more relevant appreciation of women's roles in history and celebrate March as Women's History Month, the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Iowa Department of Education, and the State Historical Society of Iowa invite Iowa's youth to participate in the *Write Women Back Into History* Essay Contest.

2009 Theme: *Women: Taking the Lead to Ensure Our Rights* This year's theme provides a special opportunity to discover and celebrate women's work in civil rights and social justice. Iowa has a rich and progressive history in civil rights advances. Ninety years before the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* declared "separate by equal" schools were unconstitutional, the Iowa Supreme Court held that Iowa schools were open to all students. Edna Griffin's request for service at a segregated Des Moines cafeteria in 1948 came seven years before Rosa Parks' celebrated refusal to move to the back of a southern bus.

Students are encouraged to choose a woman, preferably from Iowa, from any historical period, past or present, and write about the accomplishments of her life and how she has made a difference to the student and to society in the social justice and civil rights arena. Although Iowa women are preferred and encouraged, the subject of the essay may be a woman from another state or another country.

A student's own thoughts on the significance of the woman's contributions are important.

Essays should identify the following:

- ♦ Why the woman should be written into history (i.e., what meaningful contributions has she made to her community, the state, nation, or world?), and
- ♦ Why she is important to the student. Students should consider what people would learn about us from this essay 50 years from now.

A successful essay will discuss why the student researched, read about, interviewed, and/or found the subject to be a role model; it should not merely be a biographical sketch.

Eligibility: The contest is open to any sixth through ninth grade student, female or male, in Iowa. Each student may submit only one essay.

Entry Format: All entries must be double-spaced in an easy to read font, and be saved as a PDF, Microsoft Word document (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf). Maximum length is **1,000 words** not including the source list. **A source list must be included.** Submit **the essay** with a completed **entry form** to women@iowa.gov. Essays become property of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women and will not be returned.

Criteria for Judging: Entries should be checked for accuracy and use of standard English procedures: correct punctuation, spelling, grammar. Essays should be proofread for errors, not only with spellcheck. Essays should make use of evidence and include specific examples as to why the woman should be written into history and how she is important to others and the student. Essays should exhibit effective use of descriptive language, voice and originality. Citing of all sources, whether primary or secondary, is mandatory. Essays must adhere to all entry format rules.

Judges will review the essays for the following:

- Student awareness: Does the student effectively portray this woman's relevance in ordinary or extraordinary historical circumstances? Has the student convinced you of this point? (Explanation of why the woman should be written into history and how she is important to others and the student) Is it more than a biographical sketch?
- Voice and Originality: Does the essay flow and make sense? How has the student used original words and phrases to tell the story? Is the student's voice apparent? Is the essay original in voice or spirit?
- Mechanics: Does the student use correct grammar, punctuation, spelling? Are sources cited? (Accuracy and use of standard English procedures: correct punctuation, spelling, grammar)
- Adherence to all entry format rules

Judging: Winning essays will be chosen by a panel composed of Iowa authors, historians, activists, and representatives of the sponsoring agencies.

Prizes: Prizes will be awarded to the first, second, and third place winner in each of the 6-7th Grade and 8-9th Grade divisions. Winners will be honored in a ceremony at the State Capitol in March 2009. Winners, their hometown media, and *The Des Moines Register*, will be notified prior to the ceremony (March 2009). All winners and finalists will receive a certificate of participation signed by the Governor.

Special Awards: A special award offered by the State Historical Society of Iowa, the **Howard Draper Brayton and Jessie Sellman Brayton Award**, will be presented to the **first place** winner in each of the two grade categories.

Best Essays on Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math: Women have always made significant contributions to the fields of science, technology, engineering and math, but historically those contributions have not been valued as highly as those of men. The Program for Women in Science and Engineering at Iowa State University and the Women in Science and Engineering Program at the University of Iowa will award prizes to the best essays that focus on a woman in science, technology, engineering and math. All other contest rules apply.

Deadline: Essays and entrance forms must be **e-mailed** to women@iowa.gov no later than **Friday, January 30, 2009**.

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